

Agricultural Committee
Meeting Minutes
July 17, 2007

Approved as amended Aug. 7, 2007

Present: Chuck Bolton, Melanie Gordon, Chris Hague, Ruth Jones, George Malette, Dave Trumble

Meeting called to order by Chairman Chuck Bolton at 5:05 PM. He commented on the successful presentation the committee made on July 12, when members went before the Planning Board. He said there would be followup details to discuss based upon that meeting, and that he would bring these up later. He also noted an email distributed that night from Jack Munn of the Southern NH Planning Commission. Basically, it offered his assistance as we begin our work.

The minutes of the July 3 meeting were accepted with the amendment of the date in the next to last paragraph to read "The next meeting will be at 5 PM on Tuesday July 17...."

Bolton summarized the meeting agenda topics as Master Plan, zoning, and list of properties, and asked what should be considered first.

Discussion opened with Dave Trumble presenting **easement language** from the Piscataquog Watershed Association and Monadnock Conservancy. Discussion of three points followed: the purpose of the easement, limitations of the easement, and requirement that there be no disturbance of soil. The question under discussion was: How much of this language would be appropriate for the Weare town easement? George Malette will get a copy of the Weare town easement to study the language. The committee may also look at warranty deeds for language for future purchases. The purpose of doing this is to add to the existing easement language and offer the addition of preservation language for new easements. Trumble also suggested offering language for existing easements in case a modification would be an advantage. Chris Hague said that new easement language was important and the committee had time constraints so retroactive language could be written later.

Concerns Bolton raised were: What is the incentive to use open land as a farm? How do we legally express the possibility of a third party performing agriculture on the property in an easement? Malette cited possible ways to assure flexibility. At a future time Jack Munn will be invited to the committee to discuss easement language.

Melanie Gordon reported on her work marking prime soils and soils of state and local importance on lots on the **soils map** of Weare. She is identifying each landowner among these three soil types. The SNHPC map uses information from the Hillsborough County map and history of farming as its criteria. Fish and Game has a map of currently farmed lands. Bolton asked what she would do with this large list of information, and she responded that if we go ahead with an Agricultural Commission this would be a resource. It would help with a mass mailing and assist us in targeting land for preservation.

Landowners would be encouraged to participate in shaping whatever the committee recommends that the Planning Board put on the next warrant, and the list would assist the committee in encouraging people to ask questions and receive explanations before the ballot, since past warrant articles have been confusing to many people if language is unclear.

Bolton returned to the cluster development **zoning** language that will require amending if we wish to use it to preserve farm land. Malette reiterated that the Planning Board has the ability to

insist on cluster development based on soil types and land size. There followed a discussion of needed incentives and encouragement to achieve this.

There was also discussion of development on single lots that contain prime or important soils, outside the Planning Board mechanism. The committee wondered if a step in the permitting process in the building department would be to inform land owners of the prime or important soils and offer incentives not to build on those soils. This would require variances. There would need strict criteria to allow variances only for those who would actively farm, or allow others to farm. Also, Malette pointed out, we have to update the Master Plan as we consider these options.

It was noted that the Conservation Commission will be doing a natural resource inventory and that we might share research with the Commission.

Bolton then asked the members present if they wanted to focus on one topic per meeting until we get the warrant language written. The committee preferred to cover several topics at each meeting, so each person was then tasked with going home and preparing something to bring back to the whole committee next time. Use of email was encouraged to distribute written material for the committee to read before attending.

Tasks are:

- Cluster development language – Chuck Bolton

- Easement language- George Malette and Dave Trumble

- Mapping and outreach – Melanie Gordon and Ruth Jones

- Wording from “Is Your Town Farm Friendly” for Right-to- Farm
and formation of an Agricultural Commission, as well as research
and samples of wording for back lot development and preservation
on single lots- Chris Hague

- Information on the Heritage Commission and the historic use of property as a reason
to allow or encourage farming – George Malette

Meetings are scheduled for August 7 and 21 at the library. The Sawyer Room will be out of use due to construction so the group will meet upstairs.

Adjourned 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Hague